

# **2020 APAAC Annual Administrative Professional Conference**

August 28, 2020  
Phoenix, Arizona



## **EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION**

Presented by:

**Linley Wilson**

Office of the Arizona Attorney General  
Government Accountability Unit Chief Counsel

Distributed by:

ARIZONA PROSECUTING ATTORNEYS' ADVISORY COUNCIL  
3838 N. Central Ave., Suite 850  
Phoenix, Arizona 85012

ELIZABETH BURTON ORTIZ  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

# Effective Communication

...

Linley Wilson  
Office of the Arizona Attorney General  
Government Accountability Unit Chief Counsel

1

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Introduction / Overview

What is effective communication?

Why is it important?

Verbal & written forms

Personal & professional contexts

Examples / Hypotheticals

Strategies for better communication

The diagram features a central teal hexagon labeled "EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION". Surrounding it are five other teal hexagons, each containing a factor of effective communication: "Tone of voice" (top-left), "Body language" (top-right), "Word choice & phrasing" (right), "Listening skills" (bottom-right), and "Presentation skills" (bottom-left).

2

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Forms of Communication

Phone calls

Emails - formal (usually external) or informal/casual among co-workers

Letters to individuals / law firms / entities outside of the office

Legal pleadings filed in court (paralegal work / legal writing / preparation of form templates)

Texts

Zoom / WebEx / telephonic / video meetings

The image shows a red envelope icon with a white 'M' on a teal background. To its right is a screenshot of a text message conversation on a smartphone. The messages are as follows: A blue bubble from 'Mum' says 'Finally, you've entered the digital age and got a smartphone!'. A green bubble from 'Howdyoutoospace' responds 'How is it?'. Another blue bubble from 'Mum' says 'Mum?'. A green bubble from 'Howdyoutoospace' says 'Hellooooooo??'. A final blue bubble from 'Mum' says 'Why aren't you answering??'. The bottom of the screenshot shows a text input field with a green 'Send' button.

3

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Top 5 “Do’s and Don’ts”



- These generally apply to any form of communication, but particularly at the workplace
- No particular order to these
- Based on my own experience - may not apply to certain situations

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

4

### Top 5 “Do’s and Don’ts”

#### #1: Be kind

Even when the subject is confrontational

Even if the situation is stressful or you are operating under stress

Never fire off a letter or email when upset; let it sit and re-read later



---

---

---

---

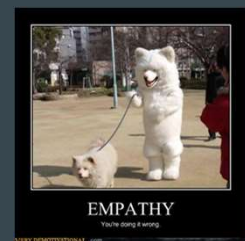
---

---

---

5

### Top 5 “Do’s and Don’ts”



#### #1: Be kind

Effective communication necessarily involves emotions - a.k.a emotional intelligence or emotional awareness

Feelings of all parties are integral to the messages conveyed or received

Empathy - identify thoughts, feelings, and state of another person

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

6

Top 5 “Do’s and Don’ts”

#1: Be kind

Exercise #1 (using a present-day example):

Legal assistant Robert had to quarantine at home and reduce his hours after receiving notification that he was exposed to someone who may have COVID-19. As a consequence, legal assistant Nancy has been working long hours and taken on additional work to cover for Robert. One day after Robert returns to the office, he calls in sick, stating that he needs a mental health day and doesn't quite feel 100%.

Nancy is frustrated and feels like she is more deserving of a mental health day than Robert!



7

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Top 5 “Do’s and Don’ts”

#1: Be kind

Robert’s email to his supervisors and colleagues:

Good morning,

I really appreciate everyone helping out while I was on reduced hours. Unfortunately, I’m not feeling well and need to take another sick day. I will be back in the office on Friday.

Thank you.

Should Nancy respond? If so, what should she say?

8

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



9

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Top 5 “Do’s and Don’ts”**

**#2: Know your audience, and tailor your message to your audience**

- Purpose of communication
- internal or external
- level of formality required
- familiar person? May need intro



10

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Top 5 “Do’s and Don’ts”**

**#3: Eliminate fluff and extraneous stuff**

“Fluff writing consists of details, information, and general language that adds absolutely no value to your content. It’s often used to add length to content and make a piece seem more elaborate. However, the overall effect is negative – it often bores the reader and drags your piece out for longer than necessary.”

<https://www.bluelead.com/blog/how-to-remove-fluff-from-content>

11

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Top 5 “Do’s and Don’ts”**

**#3: Eliminate fluff and extraneous stuff**

Exercise #2: Re-write this email to take out unnecessary fluff and simplify.

Dear Mr. Jones:

I am just writing to follow-up with you about my prior email. You may recall that on August 1, 2020, I sent you an email inquiring if you have any objection to the State’s motion for a 30-day extension of time to respond to your motion to dismiss, filed on July 20, 2020. Please let me know at your earliest convenience if you have an objection. I look forward to hearing from you. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please feel free to call or email me.

Thank you,

Linley

12

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Top 5 “Do’s and Don’ts”

#### #3: Eliminate fluff and extraneous stuff

Try to take out words like “just” and “I was wondering” and non-critical sentences

Dates are usually not necessary unless you are asking for a response by a particular date, or if the date is important for context

Avoid falling into the tl; dr trap



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

13



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

14

### Top 5 “Do’s and Don’ts”

#### #4: Respect others’ time constraints & communicate yours

- Establish reasonable and workable deadlines
- Communicate your time constraints / unavailability, too



Example: You know one of your assigned attorneys has a big deadline at the end of the month for a filing that will require a lot of exhibits and cite-checking, and that it will take a lot of work for you and the attorney to meet the deadline. Discuss the filing together and set internal deadlines to accomplish the task together.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

15

## Top 5 “Do’s and Don’ts”

### #4: Respect others’ time constraints & communicate yours

May seem like over-communication, but touching base periodically and sharing expectations v. reality will promote effective communication in the end

Don’t do this:



16

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Top 5 “Do’s and Don’ts”

### #5: Listen and reciprocate communication styles

Examples:

- Using formal or informal names or nicknames (Ms. Smith or Cynthia or Cindy)
- Reciprocation shows awareness of the other party’s intentions, feelings, and your ability to be an active listener
- Emails? Phone calls? Texts? Video conference?
  - Like that time I suggested in-person meeting when my supervisor preferred telephonic meeting
- Switch up the format if one is not working!
  - Example: my neighbor, instagram Katie

17

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Top 5 “Do’s and Don’ts”

### #5: Listen and reciprocate communication styles

Communication is not a one-way street

Requires both sides to listen, process, and react to the other person. What format does the other person prefer? What type of communicator are they?



18

---

---

---

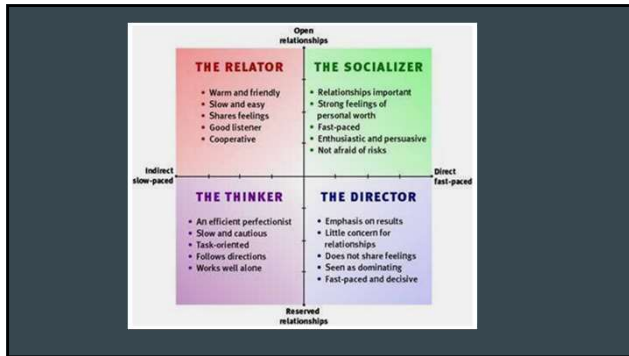
---

---

---

---

---



19

---

---

---

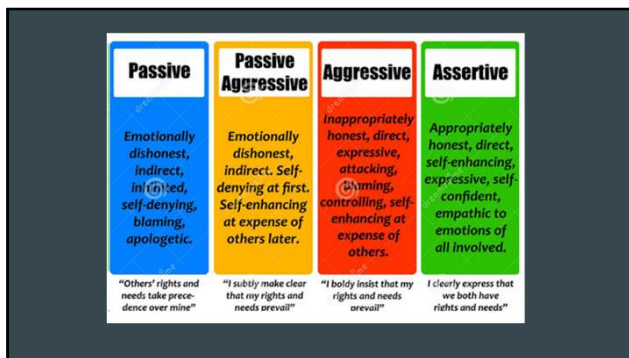
---

---

---

---

---



20

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### On the Subject of Emails...

**Email faux pas, Ranked**

- Forwarding a private conversation after someone in that someone
- Blaming your coworker's manager
- Accidentally copying the full team list
- Misquoting someone's name when it's in their signature
- 2-person conversation on a 10-person email chain

DAY TO DATA

Always re-read your emails to review for typos and tone (unless it's a boilerplate / standard language email)

Check subject lines & to: & cc: fields

Use correct punctuation - full sentences

Minimal use of exclamation points (!!!!!)

NEVER USE ALL CAPS (is this ever effective?)

21

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## On the Subject of Emails... ...During a Pandemic

Things may take a little longer than normal

Technological difficulties

Challenges of navigating work from home

A little empathy goes a long way



22

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Body Language & Facial Expressions



See The 110 Techniques of communication and public speaking by David JP Phillips (Tedx Talk): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K0pxo-dS9Hc>

23

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Body Language, Facial Expressions, & Virtual Meetings



24

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Body Language, Facial Expressions, & Virtual Meetings

Exercise #3:

What is conveyed by the body language & facial gestures of these people who are on a zoom call together?

Which person looks most engaged and appears to be listening to the meeting?



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

25

## Questions? Ideas?

Linley Wilson

[linley.wilson@azag.gov](mailto:linley.wilson@azag.gov)



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

26